

CLAIMS

- 1) Process for preparing a lactic acid bacterial starter culture, which comprises:
 - culturing at least one strain of lactic acid bacteria under aeration and in an appropriate nutrient medium, in which at least one porphyrin compound is present or is added;
 - harvesting the bacteria at the end of the said culture.
- 2) Process according to Claim 1, in which the lactic acid bacteria are selected from *Lactococcus*, *Lactobacillus*, *Leuconostoc*, *Propionibacterium*, *Bifidobacterium*, and *Streptococcus salivarius*.
- 3) Process according to either Claim 1 or 2, characterized in that the said porphyrin compound is selected from uroporphyrins, coproporphyrins, protoporphyrins, haematoporphyrins, chlorophylls and chlorophyllin, their salts and esters and their complexes with an iron atom.
- 4) Process according to any one of Claims 1 to 3, in which the said compound is added at a concentration of approximately 2.5 to approximately 100 micromoles per litre of culture medium.
- 5) Process according to any one of Claims 1 to 4, in which the culture is aerated so as to maintain, during the whole duration of the culture, an oxygen content which is equal to at least 5 millimoles per litre of culture medium.
- 6) Process according to any one of Claims 1 to 5, characterized in that the bacteria are harvested between 5 and 24 hours after the start of the culture.
- 7) Process according to any one of Claims 1 to 6, characterized in that it further comprises storage of the harvested lactic acid bacteria.
- 8) Process according to Claim 7, characterized in that the said lactic acid bacteria are stored at approximately 4°C.
- 9) Process according to Claim 7, characterized in that the said lactic acid bacteria are stored in frozen or lyophilized form.
- 10) Lactic acid bacterial starter culture which can be obtained by a process according to any one of Claims 1 to 9.
- 11) Process for preparing a fermented product, characterized in that it comprises inoculation of a medium to be fermented with a lactic acid bacterial starter culture according to Claim 10.
- 12) Use of a porphyrin compound combined with culturing under aerobic conditions for increasing the survival of lactic acid bacteria at the end of the said culture.

13) Use of a lactic starter culture according to Claim 10 for preparing a fermented product.

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